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Groups of countries in special situations: specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries: outcome of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation

Letter dated 21 September 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit the text of the Almaty Ministerial Declaration adopted by the Ministers of Trade of the States members of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries at their fourth meeting, held on 12 September 2012 in Almaty, Kazakhstan (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this text circulated as a document of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 23 (b).

(*Signed*) Byrganym **Aitimova**
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 21 September 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Almaty Ministerial Declaration adopted at the Fourth Meeting of Trade Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries, held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on 12 September 2012

We, the Ministers and officials responsible for trade of the landlocked developing countries, meeting in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on 12 September 2012, with the objective of defining common positions on strategies, new measures and actions to address the most pressing trade and development needs of our countries, providing guidance for the preparation of the ten-year review conference of the Almaty Programme of Action and expressing the need to continue working with a successor plan,

Noting that lack of direct access to and from the sea impairs the economic and social development of the landlocked developing countries and that our geographical disadvantage reduces our growth dynamics compared with coastal countries, making our countries the most disadvantaged ones in their respective regions,

Reaffirming that trade liberalization requires a balanced, well managed and fair approach for developing countries, in particular for landlocked developing countries,

Emphasizing the potential benefits of the multilateral trading system for achieving a non-discriminatory, rules-based and predictable trade environment which would provide every country, regardless of its territorial size, population or level of development, the opportunity to effectively and beneficially participate in global trade,

Underlining the critical importance of concluding the negotiations on the Doha Development Agenda with development-related outcomes that take fully into account the trade and development needs, challenges and priorities of landlocked developing countries,

Recognizing that addressing the challenges of landlockedness requires appropriate domestic policies and measures by our transit neighbours, as well as a supportive international environment, to create positive synergies between the State, society and business,

Expressing our concern about the re-emergence of rising food and energy prices, compounded by the negative impact of climate change, which adversely affect the economic and social progress achieved by the landlocked developing countries in recent years and have increased their vulnerability and weakened their ability to achieve the Millennium Development Goals,

Underlining the need to adopt general as well as specific support measures for landlocked and developing countries in the World Trade Organization, as well as in other relevant trade forums, taking into account the particular needs and special problems of these countries,

Recognizing the importance of the universal membership of the World Trade Organization, while *highlighting*, at the same time, the serious challenges faced by landlocked developing countries acceding to the World Trade Organization, namely, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan,

Recalling the Almaty Declaration and the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries,

Recalling also the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the outcome of the 2005 World Summit,

Recalling further the Asunción Platform, the Ulaanbaatar Declaration and the Ezulwini Declaration,

Recalling the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want", inviting Member States, United Nations organizations and other relevant international, regional and subregional bodies to speed up further the implementation of the specific actions in the five priorities agreed upon in the Almaty Programme of Action,

Recalling that the Doha Mandate adopted by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development at its thirteenth session (UNCTAD XIII) mandates the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to further address the special trade, investment and development needs of landlocked developing countries,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 66/214, in which the Assembly decided to convene a comprehensive ten-year review conference on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action in 2014, based on preparatory work at the regional and global levels, as well as thematic events,

We the Ministers,

Aware that the impact of the financial crisis and the economic slowdown in major developed countries has spread to developing countries, including the landlocked ones, and that economic recovery has remained so far fragile and uncertain,

State that strengthening international cooperation with a view to improving the international economic environment and to unlocking international trade negotiations in all areas, and the construction of a supportive, fair, balanced and rules-based economic framework are key elements for the promotion of inclusive and equitable economic growth and sustainable development,

Agree as follows:

Development objectives

1. Poverty reduction and sustainable and inclusive development are key and fundamental development objectives of landlocked developing countries. Structural transformation, including modernization and specialization of the productive sectors and improving physical infrastructure, has to be done in a way that is supportive to achieving national development objectives and internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

Developing productive capacities

2. With a view to mitigating the adverse development impact of landlockedness, comprehensive, coherent and coordinated policies are needed at all levels in the areas of investment, infrastructure (production, transport, telecommunications and energy), logistics (transport and trade facilitation) and technology to support efforts of landlocked developing countries towards:

- The development of a strong science and technology innovation base for addressing many of the persistent and emerging trade and development challenges that our countries face. Cooperation in the transfer of appropriate technology will play a key role in this regard.

- The development of national and local productive capacities, product and market diversification and the upgrading of physical infrastructure in order to enhance competitiveness and profitability, and reduce vulnerability to external shocks.

3. We reaffirm our commitment to undertake bold action for industrial and agricultural sector development, supported by sufficient policy space and complemented by action at the global level to effectively address the distorting effects of measures such as export subsidies, and call on other members of the World Trade Organization to do the same.

4. We call upon the international community to assist with the design and development of vulnerability indicators that would serve as an early warning mechanism to assess vulnerability to external shocks.

5. There is a need for concerted measures and actions to support landlocked developing countries' efforts to reduce commodity dependence, including through the diversification of their export base and enhanced processing of the commodities. We call upon the international community to enhance efforts to support landlocked developing countries, including through the Enhanced Integrated Framework and other programmes, in diversifying their exports through, inter alia, the transfer of relevant technologies, support to developing and strengthening their productive capacities, and capacity-building in developing relevant policies.

Promoting investment

6. Public and private investment, including foreign direct investment, should be strengthened. Moreover, landlocked developing country Governments, with the support of bilateral and multilateral donors, should encourage and facilitate private sector development, including of native industries, through, inter alia, promoting public and private partnership, entrepreneurship development and support to small and medium-sized enterprises.

World Trade Organization negotiations

7. We urge the international community to work towards the establishment of clear, balanced, fair and transparent trade rules. We call upon the members of the World Trade Organization to advance all areas of the Doha Development Round within the framework of the single undertaking, particularly areas that have a strong positive impact on the trade flows of landlocked developing countries, such as trade facilitation, market access and the elimination of non-tariff barriers and other trade-

distorting measures, as well as implementation issues. Moreover, in a time of fragile economic recovery, we urge our partners to refrain from imposing measures that limit market access.

8. The World Trade Organization negotiations have to be conducted in a way that enables effective, full and democratic participation of all members of the World Trade Organization through maintaining a multilateral, transparent, bottom-up and member-driven negotiation process in order to arrive at a successful conclusion with an ambitious, balanced and equitable outcome which ensures, inter alia, improved market access for agricultural and non-agricultural export products of landlocked developing countries.

9. We express our commitment to the ongoing negotiations on trade facilitation, particularly on freedom of transit and special and differential treatment, and call on members to accelerate progress in these areas, which are particularly important for landlocked developing countries to gain a more efficient flow of goods and services, as well as improved international competitiveness resulting from lower transaction costs.

10. The future agreement on trade facilitation, in the final outcome of the Doha Round, needs to contain binding commitments ensuring freedom of transit, customs cooperation, expedited movement, and release and clearance of goods, as well as special and differential treatment with financial support.

11. We call for the adoption of a more ambitious and development-friendly text that would address the issues that are important for the exports and imports of landlocked developing countries.

12. We reiterate our support for the proposal made by the members of the Sectorial Initiative in Favour of Cotton relating to the ambitious reduction of the domestic agricultural support which distorts the international cotton market. Members of the World Trade Organization are also urged to adopt measures to improve market access for cotton and cotton-derived products.

Accession to the World Trade Organization

13. The procedure for accession to the World Trade Organization for landlocked developing countries should be simplified. We stress the need for taking into account during the accession process the individual levels of development and the special needs and problems caused by the geographical disadvantage of being landlocked. All provisions on special and differential treatment reflected in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and in all World Trade Organization agreements must be effectively granted to all acceding landlocked developing countries.

Aid for Trade

14. Aid for Trade, including the Enhanced Integrated Framework, is essential for our countries to make effective use of the multilateral trading system. Aid for Trade to the transport and storage sector, to support regional integration and to establish and support transit corridors in landlocked developing countries and transit countries, should be a priority for Aid for Trade commitments to landlocked developing countries. We welcome the fourth global review of Aid for Trade in 2013 and we encourage the World Trade Organization and the Organization for Economic

Cooperation and Development to map the assistance provided to landlocked developing countries.

15. We call upon development partners to effectively support the Aid for Trade initiative through speedy disbursement of funds, giving adequate consideration to the special needs and requirements of landlocked developing countries, including capacity-building for the formulation of trade policies, participation in trade negotiations and implementation of trade facilitation measures, development of trade-related infrastructure as well as the diversification of export products and the strengthening of productive capacities with a view to increasing the competitiveness of landlocked developing countries' products in export markets.

International support

16. We urge our bilateral and multilateral donors to increase their technical and financial assistance in areas of interest to landlocked developing countries in support of our national efforts to overcome the obstacles imposed by geography and to integrate landlocked developing countries more beneficially into the multilateral trading system. This assistance should complement our national efforts aimed at diversifying the domestic production structure and ensure a better integration into the global economy, with competitive goods and services that minimize transaction costs related to the specific geographical situation of landlocked developing countries.

17. In expressing our appreciation to the cooperation provided by the organizations of the United Nations system, in particular the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the regional commissions, and other international organizations, especially the World Trade Organization, the World Customs Organization, the Common Fund for Commodities, the International Road Transport Union, the International Trade Centre and the World Bank, and the regional development banks, regional organizations and regional economic communities, we invite them to strengthen, within the context of their respective mandates, their efforts to help mitigate the constraining effects of landlockedness on our economic development and to provide more and better targeted technical assistance for the structural transformation of our economies.

18. We attach high importance to, and intend to further strengthen, South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation as a means for diversified trade opportunities and additional foreign direct investment flows that contribute to the sustainable development of landlocked developing countries, as well as cooperation in the transfer of appropriate technology.

19. We will further broaden regional integration as a mechanism towards improved transit transport connectivity and for ensuring greater intraregional trade, common regulatory policies, border agency cooperation and harmonized customs procedures, as well as for promoting a better coordination and deepening of regional markets. We support the ongoing regional integration processes in our regions and call on our partners to support these initiatives. We should consider joining and implementing United Nations facilitation agreements.

New and emerging challenges

20. In addition to efforts aimed at improving our transit transport situation, landlocked developing countries need to be prepared to face the new and emerging challenges and boldly grasp opportunities. We also appeal to our bilateral and multilateral donors, as well as relevant international organizations, to assist landlocked developing countries in addressing these challenges.

21. We call for international support to help the landlocked developing countries to address the negative impacts of climate change on the availability of natural resources, in particular water and arable land. Desertification, land degradation and scarcity of water for human consumption as well as for industrial and agricultural purposes pose a real threat to the livelihood of future generations in many landlocked developing countries.

22. Climate change adaptation and access to climate friendly technology have become priority issues for many landlocked developing countries. We call on the international community to adopt and to implement pertinent measures that help landlocked developing countries, consistent with commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to adjust to the impact of changing climatic conditions. In this regard, we welcome the Astana Green Bridge Partnership Programme, which would be of special importance to encourage transfer of green technologies to landlocked developing countries.

23. Landlocked developing countries should make better use of the opportunities that information and communication technologies offer to participate in international trade with exports, particularly services, that are less or not distance-sensitive. We therefore call on bilateral and multilateral donors to provide financial and technical assistance needed to improve both the information and communication infrastructure and connectivity in our countries and to train the human resources required for such activities.

24. Food insecurity poses a serious threat to the political, social and economic stability of landlocked developing countries. Overcoming this challenge requires multifaceted solutions, inter alia, the elimination of trade-distorting measures, technological upgrading, addressing the effects of climate change in the agricultural sector and the elimination of speculation in the global food markets.

25. Sustainable development should guide landlocked developing countries' efforts to achieve food sustainability.

26. A strong energy infrastructure is needed in landlocked developing countries to advance the development of domestic productive capacity and to better connect the regional and international markets. We call on the international community to enhance its support to create such infrastructure in our countries. In this context, we also re-emphasize that resources should be mobilized for the production, distribution and marketing of clean energy.

Almaty Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries

27. We note that the Almaty Programme of Action contributed to some progress in landlocked developing countries and their transit neighbours in implementing important policy reforms to remove physical and non-physical barriers to the effective participation of landlocked developing countries in global trade. However,

this progress was uneven among the landlocked developing countries and often limited in scope and impact. Worse, the global repercussions of the economic crisis in developed countries threaten to undermine this progress in many landlocked developing countries. Furthermore, over the past ten years, challenges and opportunities have arisen for landlocked developing countries that were not yet visible at the time of preparation of the Almaty Programme of Action; hence we seek to have the opportunity to enhance the Almaty Agenda.

28. We recognize the efforts that have been made at national, subregional, regional and international levels to improve and maintain the physical transit transport infrastructure to allow greater access of landlocked developing countries to and from sea ports and the international markets. However, given the large gaps in, and poor quality of, transport infrastructure, we call on the international community to increase specific and targeted financial and technical assistance to the development and maintenance of physical transport infrastructure in landlocked developing countries and their transit neighbours, with a view to closing the missing links, to enhancing intraregional connectivity and to ensuring the proper functioning of transit corridors.

The way forward

29. We emphasize the need to strengthen the coordination of landlocked developing countries in trade negotiations at the World Trade Organization, giving particular attention to freedom of transit and other relevant aspects of trade facilitation, the elimination of distorting measures, market access with particular emphasis on our development needs and support for the accession process of the landlocked acceding countries.

30. Landlocked developing countries, including through their missions in Geneva, should strengthen their substantive cooperation with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development on matters of particular interest to landlocked developing countries, including trade, development and interrelated issues in the areas of finance, technology, investment, and sustainable and inclusive development.

31. We urge those landlocked developing countries which have not done so to accede to the Multilateral Agreement on the Establishment of the International Think Tank for the Landlocked Developing Countries in order to bring the think tank to full operation, and invite the Office of the High Representative and relevant organizations of the United Nations system, Member States, including development partners, and relevant international and regional organizations to support the think tank, as it will play an important role in enhancing the analytical capability of landlocked developing countries and provide home-grown research to cater for our specific needs.

32. We commit ourselves to engage fully in the preparatory process for the ten-year review conference of the Almaty Programme of Action and to participate in the conference itself at the highest level possible. We call upon our bilateral and multilateral donors and the international community to give particular importance to the preparatory process and invite them to actively participate in the conference.

33. We express our expectation that the comprehensive ten-year review conference should come up with a successor programme of action which outlines concrete and

comprehensive measures and actions to be pursued by the landlocked developing countries, their transit neighbours and their partners to enable the landlocked developing countries to integrate more effectively into the global trading system and move closer to achieving the internationally agreed development goals.

34. We request the relevant United Nations organizations, particularly the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the regional commissions, other international organizations, especially the World Trade Organization, the World Customs Organization, the Common Fund for Commodities, the International Road Transport Union, the International Trade Centre and the World Bank, regional development banks, regional organizations, regional economic communities, national parliaments, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders to support and provide inputs to the preparation of a successor programme of action to the Almaty Programme of Action.

35. We invite donor countries and the international financial and development institutions to make voluntary contributions to the trust fund established by the Secretary-General to support the activities related to the follow-up to the implementation of the outcome of the Almaty International Ministerial Conference, as well as the participation of landlocked developing countries in the preparatory process and in the comprehensive ten-year review conference itself.

Acknowledgment

36. We express our sincere appreciation for the constant efforts undertaken by Paraguay in its capacity of Coordinator for trade and development issues of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries in Geneva, and by the Lao People's Democratic Republic in its capacity of Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries in New York.

37. We express our profound appreciation to the Government and the people of Kazakhstan for hosting this event.